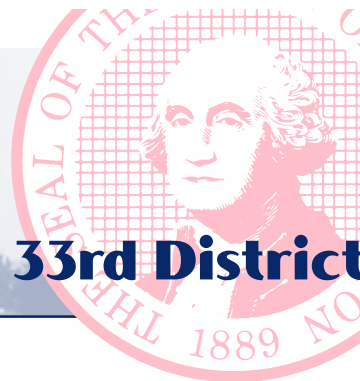




**Representative  
Shay  
Schual-Berke**



# 2001 Transportation Report

November 2001

Dear Neighbors,

Our world changed dramatically on September 11th, and we are all struggling to understand and respond to this incomprehensible tragedy. We all grieve for the thousands of family members and friends who have suffered such terrible losses.

Next year the legislature will be faced with the effects of the September 11th attacks on our economy, public safety and our bottom line. Layoffs at firms around the state, most notably at Boeing, the economic downturn, and the increased expenditures on safety and security measures will put an incredible strain on our state budget. Meeting these obligations, in the face of declining revenues, will clearly be one of our highest priorities in the upcoming legislative session.

The other major issue will be the serious business left undone in the 2001 Legislative session - transportation. Last year we did not pass a long-range plan to improve roads, relieve congestion and hasten the movement of goods and supplies on our highways. Passing a comprehensive transportation plan would have allowed us to spend more time with our families, get to work on time, and travel more safely.

As I've talked with and heard from many of you, often the same questions are raised: Why and how did we get into this mess? Why isn't there enough transportation money? If people are driving more, why doesn't the gas tax raise enough money to meet our needs? How are we going to resolve this issue?

These are important questions and they need to be answered. We can't solve a problem until we understand what it is. This newsletter has information to answer some key questions related to transportation in our state. For those of you wishing additional detail, you can access the DOT website at [www.wsdot.wa.gov](http://www.wsdot.wa.gov), or you can call me. I'll be glad to talk with you about transportation or other issues.

Finally, I have included a short survey to get your opinion about transportation. Our caucus will be discussing how to address transportation issues in the coming weeks before session. I would greatly appreciate your opinions and ideas to better inform my positions on this critical subject.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Warmly,

**Shay Schual-Berke, M.D.**  
State Representative

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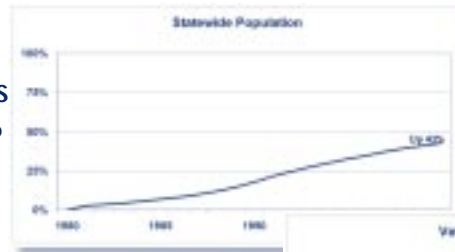
# 2001 Transportation Report

## What's going on with Washington's transportation system?

Washington State is in a serious transportation crisis. We have ended up in this situation because over the last twenty years we have not invested enough in our transportation system at a time of booming population growth and burgeoning economic activity.

Since 1980, population growth, vehicle registrations, vehicle miles traveled and movement of freight have risen sharply.

Since 1980, the state's population has grown by 43%



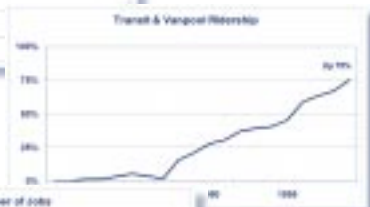
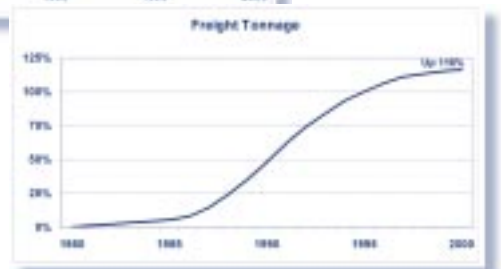
Since 1980, motor vehicle registrations in the state have grown by 57%



Since 1980, vehicle miles driven in the state have grown by 88%



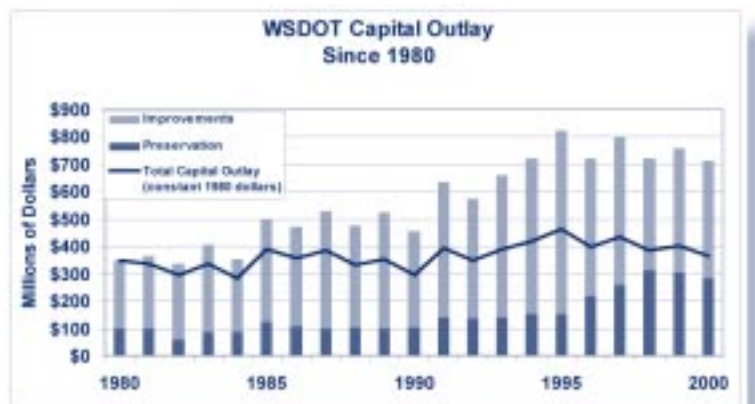
Since 1980, the tonnage of goods and freight moved by road in the state has grown by 116%



Meanwhile, transportation spending adjusted for inflation has remained the same since 1980.

Investment has not kept pace.

Total capital outlays on the transportation system directed through the Department of Transportation actually have not grown on an inflation-adjusted basis (1980 dollars).



## But what about the gas tax? Aren't we collecting more than ever?

Yes, and no. Each penny of gas tax generates \$32 million per year. The 23 cents we pay generates \$736 million per year, or roughly \$1.5 billion per biennium. The state receives a total of \$2.2 billion in transportation revenue every two years, making the gas tax the largest single source of revenue. With federal funds and bonding (borrowing), we can get that up to \$3.8 billion. With \$200 billion in unmet transportation needs predicted during the next 20 years, we're falling farther behind.

The gas tax has not been raised in ten years. If adjusted for inflation, our 23-cent gas tax would be 37 cents. While total dollars collected are indeed growing, the spending power of total collections is not much different from 1980. This is because of inflation, higher construction costs, improved fuel efficiency and the fact that increased numbers of people, cars and miles driven translate into higher highway maintenance costs and greater need for more new lanes and roads.

Based on our investment patterns, our predicament was inevitable. Roads are jammed with vehicles. Bridges need repairs. Highway safety corrections are overdue. Ferries are past their retirement. Major pavement rehabilitation costs loom for interstates. Transit and other alternative transit modes struggle to mobilize the assets needed to deliver adequate service levels. Railroad crossings need grade separation. Transportation services to rural areas need strengthening. The list goes on.

## What about efficiencies?

**The Legislature passed some key efficiency measures this year including:**

1) Permit streamlining to speed the transportation planning process; 2) a measure to allow large projects to be designed and built by the same contractor; and 3) rights-of-way purchasing authority, allowing the DOT to purchase land needed for construction early in the process, before prices skyrocket. We continue to search for other efficiencies to assure that we are spending our transportation dollars effectively, but efficiencies alone will not solve our problem.

## What are we going to do?

As I said earlier, the Legislature failed to reach consensus on a transportation investment package during the 2001 sessions. There is still no plan on the table. While I cannot tell you what we will happen next year, I can tell you my priorities remain the same. I am committed to long-term planning and solutions to provide congestion relief, safety improvements, viable and effective public transportation choices and allowing the state's regions to seek solutions to what they consider to be their biggest transportation challenges. Meanwhile, I invite you to complete the survey included in this newsletter, and to contact me by phone, fax or email at your convenience. I would very much like to hear your views on this issue.

### E-memo

Until December 1st, I will continue to send out regular updates to constituents on my email list. After that, however, election-year restrictions will prohibit me from sending out these updates until the 2002 elections. Otherwise, I will do my best to send regular updates on Legislative issues to your in-box. If you would like to be added to my distribution list, please send me your e-mail address. My e-mail address is: Schualbe\_Sh@leg.wa.gov

## Transportation Survey

How do you get to work now?

- ☐ Car      ☐ Carpool  
☐ Bus      ☐ Train  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

How long is your commute?

- ☐ Less than 20 minutes  
☐ 20-40 minutes  
☐ 40 minutes- 1 hour  
☐ 1 hour or more

What are your biggest complaints about transportation? *(Please rank top three)*

- ☐ On ramps and off ramps that are too short for traffic to merge without backups  
☐ Traffic lights that are not synchronized to help traffic flow smoothly  
☐ Potholes, poor road conditions  
☐ HOV lanes not available to all drivers  
☐ Not enough mass transit service in my area  
☐ Inadequate park and ride lots  
☐ Congestion  
☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Transportation Survey**  
continued on the next page

# 2001 Transportation Report

Last session we enacted several new laws to increase the efficiency of our transportation system. From the list below, which three reforms would you most like to see enacted?

- ☐ Make the Governor, instead of the Transportation Commission, accountable for transportation
- ☐ Keep transportation taxes local, and don't spread them statewide
- ☐ Use measurable benchmarks to get higher performance in the Department of Transportation
- ☐ Prioritize projects to address the worst traffic chokepoints
- ☐ Institute toll lanes and bridges
- ☐ Encourage more carpooling, staggered work schedules and more mass transit alternatives.
- ☐ Enter into contracts for private companies to build and levy tolls (i.e. the Tacoma Narrows Bridge proposal)
- ☐ Other reforms: \_\_\_\_\_

Sound Transit was approved by the voters in 1996. Although it was originally going to start in North Seattle, it is now scheduled to start in South Seattle, ending a mile south of the airport. Do you support Sound Transit's plan as it currently stands?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

What options would you support to fund transportation improvements?

- ☐ Increase the gas tax
- ☐ Increase license permits and fees
- ☐ Borrow more through state bonds
- ☐ Dedicate sales taxes on auto parts and equipment to transportation (*This would mean a cut in the general operating budget where these taxes now go.*)
- ☐ Levy a sales tax at the wholesale level for gas
- ☐ Add a tax on new car purchases
- ☐ Increase truck license fees
- ☐ Other revenue sources: \_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ Do not spend new money for transportation.

Please use this space to make any additional comments about transportation:

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*Thank you for your help! Your answers will guide me as we continue to work on ways to address our transportation problems.*

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**2001 Transportation  
Report and Survey**

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